(c) and (d) Demands vary of account of international market forces, variation in productions, food shortages etc. However, the Government has taken the following steps to increase export of wheat and rice from the Central Pool:—

(i) Offer wheat and rice from the Central Pool for export and maintain the export price of wheat and rice at internationally competitive levels,

(ii) To constantly monitor exports of wheat and rice and sort out the problems on this front,

(iii) Setting up cleaning facilities at the Kandla Port for ensuring that acceptable quality of foodgrains are sent for export, and

(iv) Creation of an Export Cell in the Department of Food & Public Distribution to deal with export of foodgrains in a focused manner.

Procurement of Kharif Crops

2637. SHRI AIMADUDDIN AHMED KHAN (DURRU) : Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) the likely quantity of Kharif crops to be procured; and

(b) whether Government are thinking of increasing the procurement price of Kharif crops?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN) : (a) As the procurement operations are voluntary in nature and the farmers have the choice to sell their produce to the State Government, Food Corporation of India, or in the open markets, as is advantageous to them, no target is fixed for procurement of Kharif crops. However, in a meeting taken by this Ministry with Food Secretaries of rice producing States on 16-8-2001, it was estimated that a quantity of 195 lakh tonnes of rice would likely be procured during Kharif Marketing Season 2001-2002.

(b) At present, there is no proposal to increase the Minimum Support Prices already fixed for the 2001-2002 Kharif crop.